

# Technical Writing for the Public



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**OCTOBER 30, 2012**

# Session Goals



- 1) Learn how NOT to bury your lead
- 2) How to align your message with audience needs
- 3) Practice

# Three Types of Information



- 1) Statement (topic) sentences- summarize or identify the purpose of a document.
- 2) Observations– facts, examples, details
- 3) Interpretation of the evidence
  - So
  - Because of this
  - Therefore



# Three Types of Information



- Statement
  - Observations
  - Why does this matter?
- Tom is the most punctual person I know.
  - He was 10 minutes late for the meeting.
  - So I was worried because that is unlike him.

# Burying Your Lead



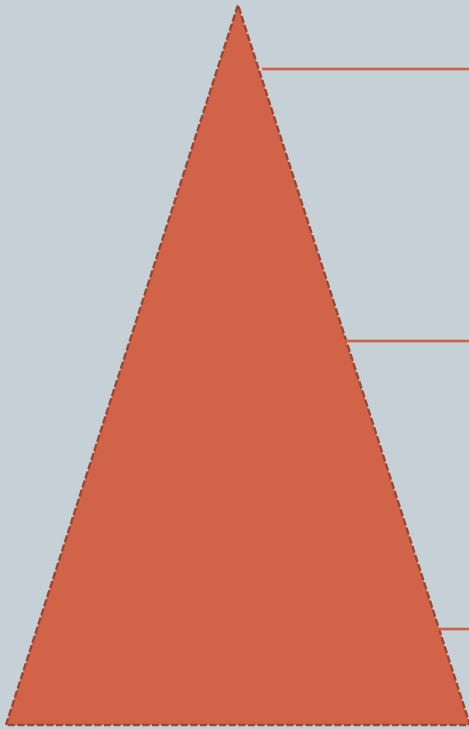
- Burying your lead means to say at the end of a document or paragraph what you should have said at the beginning.



# Get to the Point



- “What’s the Point?”



Major point here.

- Course of action or summary.

Supporting details here.

- Why course of action is important

- Why conclusion is correct

“Only if they’re hooked” facts here.

- Contact information

- Map/ directions

- Website information

# Making Sure You're Getting to the Point



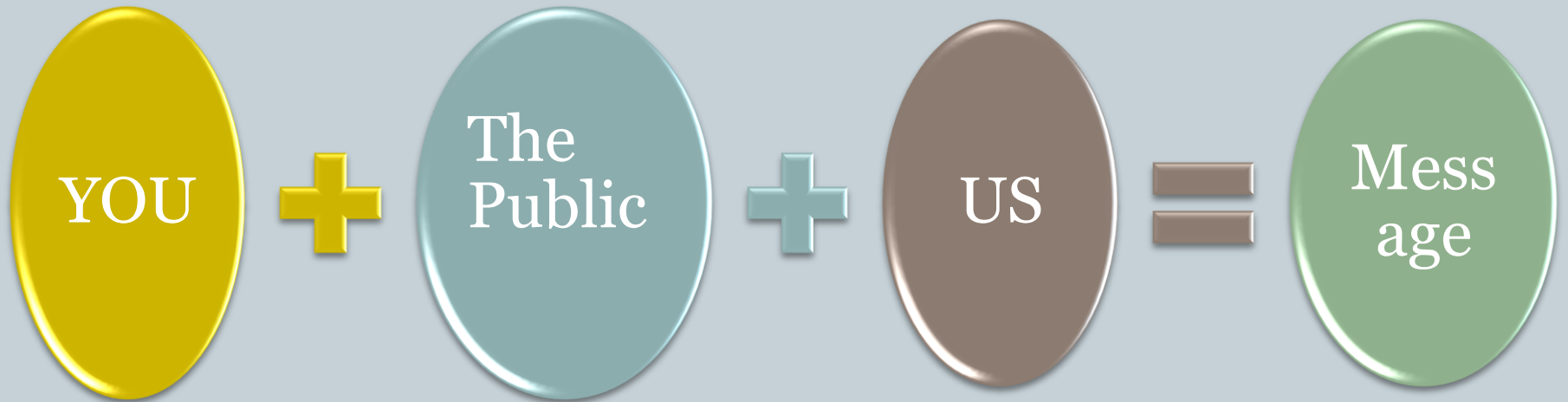
- **First Sentence Test**
  - Read the first sentence and ask yourself
    - ✦ “Does this sentence make it clear what the purpose of this document is?”
      - The public is invited to a meeting to express opinions about . . .
    - ✦ “Does this sentence identify what this document will prove?”
      - Mr. and Mrs. Landowner are in violation because . . .
  - If the answer is “NO:”
    - ✦ Read your last sentences and ask yourself “Which sentences identify purpose or what the document will prove?”

# Aligning Your Message with the Public's Needs



- Knowledge & Skill sets
- Misperceptions
- Constant Confusions
- What Makes People Mad?

# Formula for Creating Message



# Formula for Crafting Messages



**What the Humane Society Wanted**

**What We Both Wanted**

**What the Public Wanted**

To reduce the feral cat population

To reduce feral cats who were pests

To control rodents

To reduce feral cat pests



How Many Mice Would You Catch If You  
Were Always Pregnant?

# The Take Home Message



- The most common problem is “Burying Your Lead.”
  - The first sentence test
  - The last sentence test
- The second most common problem is not recognizing your audience’s needs.
  - Consider: Me, them, us– and then craft your message by aiming it toward people who might not think like you.
  - Including grant readers!